

Occasional Notes
from the Cambridge Historical Commission

The Regicides in Cambridge: Edward Whalley and William Goffe



Charles I

I. The English Civil War

The original charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony had been issued by Charles I in 1629. Charles, however, was no Puritan; his religious policies strongly supported the Anglican faith and polity, and he was actively hostile to those who wished to reform the English church. His civil policies also alienated many—for example, he advocated the divine right of kings and ruled without a Parliament for eleven years from 1629. Eventually, England exploded into civil war between Royalists loyal to the king and reformist Parliamentarians led by the Protector, Oliver Cromwell.

In January 1649, England's House of Commons—without the assent of either the King or the House of Lords—created a High Court of Justice to sit for the trial of King Charles I. This was an outrageous act—previous monarchs had been deposed, but none had ever been brought to trial *as monarchs*. The king was charged with high treason and other high crimes. Charles refused to enter a plea, insisting that his authority to rule had been given to him by God, and no earthly court had the power to judge him. Fifty-nine of the 135 commissioners signed Charles's death warrant on January 29, 1649, and he was beheaded on the following day. The reins of leadership were seized by Oliver Cromwell.¹

Lucius Paige wrote in his *History of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1630-1877*:

While the Protectorate of Cromwell continued, Massachusetts was a favored colony, and the inhabitants of Cambridge shared the general benefit of political



Oliver Cromwell

and ecclesiastical privileges. But his death, and the incompetency of his son Richard, prepared the way for the accession (or Restoration, as it was styled) of Charles the Second, who, on the twenty-ninth day of May, 1660, the anniversary of his birth, entered London in triumph. (67)

At his ascension, Charles II offered the people a general pardon and granted amnesty to Cromwell's supporters—except those judges and officials directly involved in his father's trial and execution. Some of the regicides were executed in 1660; others received life imprisonment; still others fled from England. On July 27, 1660, two of the Regicide Judges, Edward Whalley and William Goffe, both Major-Generals under Cromwell, arrived in Boston. Whalley, a military leader of distinction, was cousin to Cromwell; Goffe, one of the most radical officers in Cromwell's New Model Army, was married to Whalley's daughter Frances.²

For his account of this time Paige relied heavily on a history of Massachusetts published by Governor Thomas Hutchinson in 1764. Hutchinson related that, after the arrival of Whalley and Goffe, they were received "very courteously" by Governor John Endicott and visited by the "principal persons" in town. "Although they did not disguise themselves yet they chose to reside at Cambridge . . . where they went the first day they arrived."



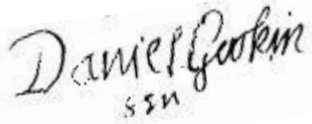
Charles II (1660-1665), John Michael Wright

Paige wrote that it was not clear why the two men decided to settle in Cambridge. "A principal inhabitant of the town, Edward Goffe, was the namesake of one of the regicides, and may have been his brother or cousin; but I have found no proof of such relationship." (67) Edward Goffe was a large landowner and one of the wealthiest men in Cambridge; he had died at the end of 1658, and his son, Samuel, a farmer, inherited the homestead.³

It seems more likely that they came to Cambridge because of their close ties with Captain Daniel Gookin.

Daniel Gookin was said to have emigrated with his father from Kent to Virginia in 1621; he may have arrived in Boston in 1644; in that year he was accepted as a freeman. He lived briefly in Boston and Roxbury, but was in Cambridge about 1647, where he lived until his death on March 19, 1686/87, aged 75. He was one of the most active citizens in Cambridge; among many other roles, he was Licenser of the Printing-press, a Selectman, and a long-time Governor's Assistant. Before 1652, he was elected Captain of the Cambridge military company and described as "a very forward man to advance martial discipline, and withal the truths of Christ."

Gookin was "trusted by Oliver Cromwell as a confidential agent and was selected by him to assist in executing his favorite project of transplanting a colony from New England to Jamaica." (Paige, 563) He visited England twice; on his second voyage back to the colonies, Whalley and Goffe were fellow passengers and may have stayed with him during their time in Cambridge. In 1660, Gookin was probably living on the easterly side of Holyoke Street, between Harvard and Mount Auburn streets. (He later lived in a grand house on the site of St. Paul's Catholic Church at the corner of Bow and Arrow streets.)

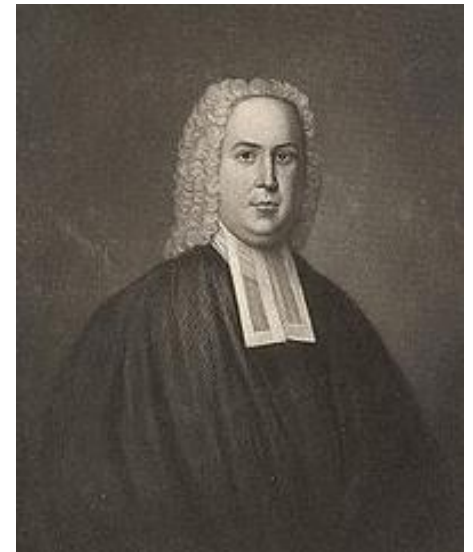
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Gookin" with "SSN" written below it.

Daniel Gookin's signature
www.sewallgenealogy.com

A fragment of Goffe's journal was printed in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1863, 1864, in which he described his time in Cambridge. On the 9th of August, he wrote that Gookin had shown a paper brought in a Scottish ship, "wherein ye Lords do order 66 members of ye High court of Justice to be secured, with yr estates,--its dated 18 d. May, 1660. But I will meditate on Hebr. 13. 5.6." ⁴

On the 15th, Goffe and others "sup't at Mr. Chauncey's." Reverend Charles Chauncy, a minister who fathered four ministers, was President of Harvard College. Goffe wrote: ". . the good old servant of ye Lord, still expressing much affection, & telling us, he was perswaded ye Ld had brought us to this country for good both to them and or selves."

Rev. Charles Chauncy in his younger days



On the evening of August 23rd, they (Goffe and Whalley?) visited Elder Frost. Edmund Frost was the Ruling Elder of the Church in Cambridge; in 1660 he was probably living in a house on the north side of Kirkland Street, near Francis Avenue. Paige wrote of him: “He was reputed to be rich in Faith . . . yet he had trial of earthly poverty, [possessing] little besides his homestead, and his pressing wants were relieved by the Church.” (554) In his journal, Goffe noted:

[Frost] received us with great kindness & love esteeming it a favour yt we would come into yr mean habitation; assured us of his fervent prayers to ye Lord for us: --A glorious saint makes a mean cottage a stately palace; were I to make my choice, I would rather abide with ys saint in his poor cottage then with any one of ye princes yt I know of at ys day in ye world.

By February 1661, Governor Endicott seemed to have had second thoughts about harboring the Regicides and on the 22nd summoned a court of assistants “to consult about securing them, but the court did not agree to it.” (Hutchinson) Deciding it was no longer safe in Cambridge, Whalley and Goffe left on the 26th. “Within a few days . . . orders arrived from England for their arrest; and there was at least a show of earnest exertion, on the part of the magistrates, to overtake them; but the effort was in vain.” (Paige, 69)



Gov. John Endicott

According to Hutchinson, Gookin was

reported to . . . manage their estates; and the commissioners [investigating the regicides] being informed that he [Gookin] had many cattle at his farm in the King's Province which were supposed to be Whalyses or Goughs, caused them to be seized for his Majesty's use til further order, but Capt. Gookin, standing upon the privilege of their charter and refusing to answer before the commissioners, as soe, there was no more done in it. ⁵

By the 7th of March, the Regicides had reached New Haven. After many travails, they made their way to Hadley, Massachusetts, where they found shelter in the home of Reverend John Russell, a former Cambridge

resident and Harvard College graduate (1645). The exact dates and circumstances of the deaths of the two Regicides are unknown, and there are many conflicting stories. Many sources agree that Whalley died in Hadley in the mid-1670s and was buried in Rev. Russell's cellar (or a neighbor's yard). However, some sources assert that Whalley left Hadley and founded families in Rhode Island, Maryland, or Tennessee. Goffe survived his father-in-law by several years; some sources attest that he, too, was buried in the Russell cellar. Neither man was ever betrayed to the authorities.

Endnotes

¹ "Charles I of England." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved September 21, 2005.
<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_I_of_England

² Biographies. *British Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Protectorate 1638-60*. Retrieved September 22, 2005.
<<http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/index.htm>

³ In 1909 and 1910, during the excavation of Massachusetts Avenue in Harvard Square for the Cambridge subway, workers uncovered the remains of the foundation of two houses, one of which belonged to the Goffe family. Before 1654 that house had been acquired by Harvard College to be as a dormitory, called Goffe's College. No one is sure when or how Goffe's College was removed, but Samuel Eliot Morison speculated that it disappeared before 1677. When the excavations were closed, metal plates were set in the roadway to mark the sites of the two foundations.

⁴ Hebrews, 13, ⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. ⁶ So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

⁵ "Narrative of the Commissioners from England about New England" in Hutchinson's *Collection of Papers*

Further online reading

British Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1638-60 is an excellent site on the English Civil Wars; biographies of all the Regicides are included. www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/index.htm

To read more of Hutchinson's account of the Regicides in the colonies, visit:

www.rootsweb.com/~mikegoad/html/generals_whalley_and_goffe.htm